

## ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

### *EMERALD COMMUNITY BACKGROUND*

The Town of Emerald was organized in April, 1861. The first meeting was held at the home of Thomas Ross on the first Monday in April.

St. Croix County was formed in 1840, a large county including much of the “Indian Head” area. Wisconsin became a state May 29, 1848. In 1850, St. Croix County was reduced in size to nose and chin of the “Indian Head” area. In 1860, St. Croix County became the same size and shape as it is today. By the 1870’s farmers were just beginning to plow land in the county and much of Emerald was still in forest. Since the trees were cut, the Town of Emerald has been an agricultural community.

In 1861, the Town of Emerald had six schools, West Central, Hutton Creek, Carr Creek, Oak Dale, Thrifty Oak and Bell. West Central School (District #1) was near the NW corner of CTHs G and O and was operated from the 1880’s through the 1930’s. The building has since been torn down. Hutton Creek School, (District #3) was near the southwest corner of 170<sup>th</sup> and 220<sup>th</sup> and operated from the early 1900’s. It was destroyed by fire in the 1930’s and was rebuilt to include a basement and furnace. It is now a single-family home. Carr Creek School (District #4) was between 220<sup>th</sup> and 230<sup>th</sup> on north side of 130<sup>th</sup>. It was built in 1879, destroyed by fire in 1903, rebuilt and remodeled in 1923 (basement, furnace, toilets), closed in the 1960’s and is now a single-family home. The Oak Dale School (District #5) was between 240<sup>th</sup> and 250<sup>th</sup> on the north side of CTH G and is now a single-family home. Thrifty Oak School (District #6) was between 250<sup>th</sup> and 260<sup>th</sup> on south side of 170<sup>th</sup> and was built in 1880’s, closed around 1965. The building was moved and used as a residence, then a garage, and finally animal housing before being demolished or burned down. The Bell School (District #7), named for the school bell, was on the northwest corner of 130<sup>th</sup> and 250<sup>th</sup>. It was built in 1884, remodeled in 1940 and closed in 1961. The building was moved and eventually torn down. The consolidation of school districts began in 1953 and by 1961 the common and joint school districts had consolidated into the school districts that exist today.

The Town of Emerald has five streams from northeast to southwest they are: South Fork of the Willow, Hutton Creek, Fleming Creek, Dry Run Creek and Carr Creek which runs into Dry Run Creek on the western edge of the town. All five creeks flow northwest into the Willow River.

The Emerald Post Office was established in 1872. Mail operated until the late 1990’s when mail delivery was taken over by Glenwood City. Emerald residents were able to keep the address name of Emerald, but had to switch to the Glenwood City zip code.

First record of a cheese factory in the town shows up in 1896, the Emerald Cheese factory owned by E.T. Jepson in section 27. The second cheese factory was the Emerald Creamery owned by F.L. Richer, it was established in 1903. It’s name was changed to the Emerald Cooperative in 1907. It burned and was rebuilt in 1912 then merged with another creamery just across the line in the Town of Glenwood. It closed about 1954 or 1955.

The town’s most famous resident was Burleigh Arland Grimes. He was an American professional baseball player and was the last pitcher officially permitted to throw the spitball. Nicknamed “Ol’ Stubblebeard”, Grimes was born August 18, 1893 in the Town of Emerald. His parents were Nick Grimes and Ruth Tuttle. Grimes made his professional debut in 1913 in Ottumwa, Iowa, for the Ottumwa Packers in the Central Association. He made his major league debut on September 10, 1916 for the Pittsburgh Pirates and in 1920, when spitball was banned, he was

named as one of the 17 established pitchers who would be allowed to continue to throw the pitch. The 26-year old Grimes made the most of this advantage, and over the course of his 19-year career, won 270 games and pitched in four World Series. At the time of his retirement, he was the last of the 17 spitballers left in the league. He played for the Pittsburgh Pirates three times, the Brooklyn Dodgers, the New York Giants, the Boston Braves, the St. Louis Cardinals two times, the Chicago Cubs, and the New York Yankees from 1916 to 1934. He also managed and was a scout for major and minor league baseball. He was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1964. He died December 6, 1985 in Clear Lake, Wisconsin, at age 92.

The center of trade and business in the area was the unincorporated community of Emerald which is on the east edge of Emerald and crosses into the Town of Glenwood. The following is a condensed history of the community of Emerald taken from *Emerald Wisconsin A Souvenir Booklet 1868-2004*.

### EMERALD...IT STARTED WITH A SAWMILL

Emerald was started in the 1860's, although settlers moved there in 1858. Most of the settlers were Irish, Norwegian and Dutch and came from the east. The first modes of travel were oxen, mules and horses. The first trails were paths through the fields. The first road was by the old mill. It was made of corduroys (roads made of logs laid crosswise). Roads were made between towns as they grew. The first settlers in Emerald were William, John and Sam Fleming; James Starr; Sam Humphrey; and S. Springsteen in 1858. The first settlement was between Albert Kelm's (Burleigh Larson's farm) and John Cassellius (the former Marvin Cassellius farm or the last place on CTH D before the Emerald Cemetery).

The Emerald Sawmill (also known as the Fleming Mill) was erected near the creek that flows on the west side of Highway D, a mile south of the community of Emerald. It was started about 1870 and ran until 1910. William, John and Sam Fleming owned the sawmill. Workers used water from the creek in the steam boilers. Sometimes when the creek was dry they had to run the well, which was near the Noble Fleming farm, (south of Emerald, first place west on the right on Highway G), day and night to supply water for the boilers. At first pine lumber was sawed, but later mostly hardwood lumber taken from logs from the Big Woods. Logs were brought in by sleds in the winter on roads that had been iced the night before by pouring water on them. The annual cut was about 750,000 board feet.

Houses were put up along the road. The demand for lumber was so great that they didn't need to go far for a market. The wood scraps were used to heat the boilers. The cemetery was behind the Stabbenaus house, on the west side of CTH D south of Emerald. The bodies were later transferred to the Greenwood Cemetery, when it was constructed.

At one time the community of Emerald had two grocery stores, two churches, a barbershop, bank, two hardware stores, three saloons, two lumberyards, hotel, creamery and three service stations. The first store was owned and operated by S. E. Linderfield. It stood on the west side of Highway D in the Emerald Park area. Mr. McPherson was the first man to own the feed mill. It was then located near Herman Westphal's. Mr. Herman Wilfred from Baldwin peddled meat to the settlers and the farmers. James Goodwin was the first postmaster, which started January 15, 1872. The second postmaster was Charles Hurd who came to office July 2, 1885. Margaret Blum of Roberts tells of her grandfather, Nels Lorentsen, starting the first creamery in Emerald in the late 1800's. Lorentsen was born in 1872 and when he married Elise (Nelson) Lorentsen they moved to Emerald. Blum said he owned and operated the Emerald Creamery. He left Emerald in the early 1900's.

The first school was the Mill School which was out near the sawmill. The next school was the Elm Land School which was across from John Cassellius (across from the Emerald Cemetery and north of the corner of Hwy D and Hwy G). The foundation still remains today. The Emerald Valley School was built in town in 1925 at a cost of \$8,500. Church services were first held at the Mill School. The Emerald Methodist Church was the first church put up in Emerald. Next the Zoar Lutheran Church was constructed, but was razed around 1965. The Guy McCluskey American Legion Post was located on the site where Emerald is today. They also had a Legion Auxiliary. The men from the First World War organized a Last Man Club. The legion building still stands to the west of town. There was a lumber yard where Hartwigs lived on Main Street but it burned. There was a public well near William Nilssen's store and everyone got their water there. Billy Nilssen ran the general store for 51 years.

A railroad line was started in the Town of Emerald, about 1900, headed for Prairie Farm, but was never completed because of lack of funds. The Soo Line came into Emerald before 1910 from Cylon and traveled into Glenwood City and Downing until 1940. The railway called the Minnesota and Wisconsin ran from Spring Valley in 1893 into Woodville and then into Emerald until 1930. In 1901 the Omaha took over the branch. The first telephone was established in Emerald in 1900 by the Community Telephone Company of Wisconsin which had its main office at Black River Falls and branch offices throughout Wisconsin. In 1902 cars (autos) began to appear in the vicinity.

For entertainment years ago they had parties at which they square danced and pulled taffy. They used to have a band in Emerald. Home talent plays were also presented at the Legion Hall. Baseball was always a favorite activity. The Emerald Ball Club played in cow pastures until the ball park was landscaped in Emerald.

Sources:

Cows, Creameries and Cheese Factories

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1995

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Members of the Emerald Plan Commission.

**DEER PARK COMMUNITY BACKGROUND**

The following condensed background for the Village of Deer Park was compiled by Village Clerk/Treasurer Roland Thompson from the books *The History Of The Beginning And Growth Of The Village Of Deer Park, Wisconsin And The Surrounding Area, Volumes 1 And 2*. There is a great deal more history available in the two volumes. Both are available to review at the History Project Area of the Deer Park Public Library.



Several deer at the “deer park” in Deer Park. Photo by Roland Thompson.

Nestled in the northern part of St. Croix County lies a small village – Deer Park. The community got its name when a genuine “deer park” was built in 1858 by Otto Neitge. Deer Park has come a long way since 1858.

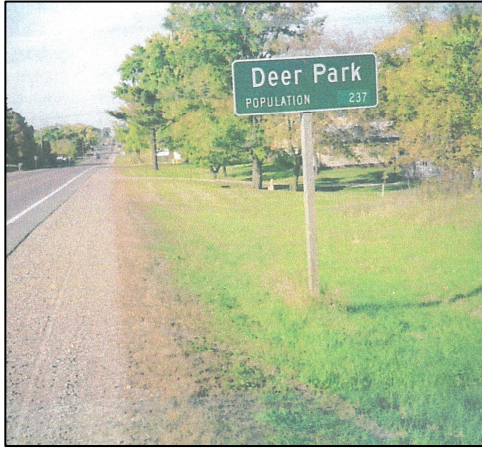
In 1908, Deer Park had a population of 294. It had German Lutheran and Norwegian Methodist churches; a creamery; a meat market; a livery barn; two blacksmiths, one who dealt in agricultural implements; one furniture dealer who was an undertaker and also sold agricultural implements; one dealer in hardware who sold fuel and feed; four general stores, one of which sold meat; a branch of the New Richmond roller mills and a branch of the Interstate Lumber Company, which was based in Stillwater, MN. That year, the State Bank of Deer Park, was incorporated on June 5, with a paid up capital of \$10,000. Their statement July 15, 1908, showed in surplus and undivided profits \$5,131.18.

Deer Park’s first school was built in 1863; it was a log structure one mile south of the present building. The first structure was replaced in 1865 with a frame building that was later moved to Menomonie. In 1878 a new school was built at the permanent location on STH 46. However, that building burned down a year later. The fourth school building was built in 1880 for \$1,375. From 1882, on the school was known as the Deer Park State Graded School. It was divided into two departments with the three lowest grades and two upper. A one-room addition was built in 1905 for \$700 and it is possible that is when another grade was added. In 1921 another new school was constructed. The 1905 addition was sold to John Anderson and the older portion was deconstructed and the lumber salvaged. From 1921 through 1941-42 the school included nine grades. After 1942 ninth graders were sent to high schools in New Richmond or Amery. Deer Park consolidated with Amery in 1962 and for 10 years the Deer Park school was used for local pupils grades one through six. The school closed in 1972 but opened for one grade from 1972 through 1976. In 1976 the village paid \$100 for the building and in 1980 sold it to a private party for living quarters and a business.

Deer Park had both a creamery and a cheese factory for many years. The Deer Park Creamery was started before 1896 as it was reported as already functioning as a plant that year. The creamery went through many different owners until finally it was bought out by a New Richmond creamery



and became a receiving station for collecting milk to be hauled to New Richmond. The creamery closed in 1947 or 1948 and the building was taken down and salvaged. The locker plant is located at the creamery's former site. The Deer Park Cheese Factory was located south of the school building on STH 46. It started in 1913 and became a cooperative in 1916. The factory was closed by 1948 but the actual date is not known. The building was divided into two parts, one part became a dwelling on North Street and the other a home on STH 46 near the original site of the cheese factory.



Population of Deer Park in 1998. Photo from Volume I of the Deer Park History.

The community incorporated in 1913 to become a village in Wisconsin. A village park was completed in 1960 and in 1968 Deer Park once again had a "deer park." A sewer system was completed in 1969. The village received a \$219,362 block grant in 1985 for housing rehabilitation and the construction of a Senior Citizens Center. The village and Town of Cylon each borrowed funds to pay for the new fire department headquarters which were built at the same time. In 1989, Deer Park was awarded \$346,100 for elderly housing from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. An eight-unit, low-income, elderly housing project was

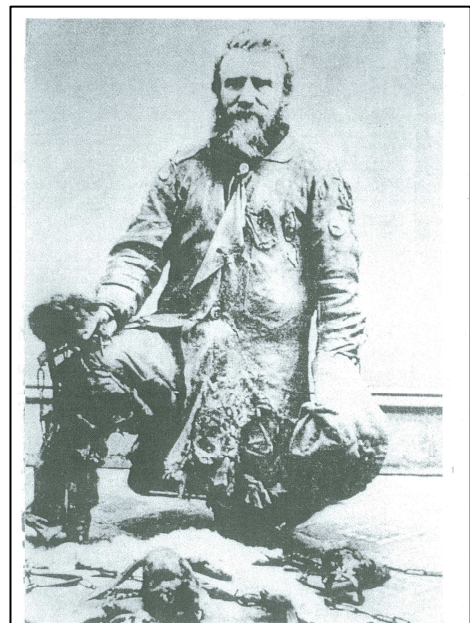
completed in 1990. Construction of a new \$161,100 handicapped accessible library was completed in 1997. All of these improvements to the Village of Deer Park have made this a very attractive community in which to live.

### *History of the Otto Neitge Family and Their Land*

George Otto Neitge, known as "The Old Dutch Hunter" was born about 1817 in Prussia, which was part of the German Empire. Around 1842, he married Louise Bonning in Prussia. In 1845, a son was born to the couple. They named him George Otto Neitge Jr. after his father. There is no record of any other children born to George Otto and Louise Neitge.

George Otto Neitge Sr., along with a brother named Reinhardt Neitge, immigrated from Prussia in 1850. George Otto Neitge Sr. filed his Declaration of Intent to Become a Citizen on September 13, 1850 in Erie County, New York. George Otto left his son and wife in Prussia; we assume he was going to send for them when he found a place to settle. Between 1850 and 1852, the two Neitges were part of the work force that enlarged the Erie Canal. In 1852, George Otto Neitge Sr. and his brother Reinhardt, came to St. Croix County, Wisconsin.

They settled on 40 acres (SW1/4 of the NW1/4 of Section 8 in Cylon Township) just east of the present Village of Deer Park. Here on a knoll overlooking a small lake, George Otto and Reinhardt built a cabin. It was the first dwelling in the area. Later they constructed a small stockade. The stockade surrounded the small lake. The



GEORGE OTTO NEITGE-THE DUTCH HUNTER

1817-1889

IMAGINATION GAVE PIONEER WEALTH AND THE VILLAGE OF DEER PARK, WISCONSIN ITS NAME.

stockade was built in such a way that deer could jump in for water, but could not get back out. Later with the help of other settlers in the area, the stockade was increased to cover 160 acres (NW1/4 of Section 8.) The deer in the stockade were slaughtered and the meat sold to the military at Fort Snelling to feed the soldiers. Sometime after the first stockade was built, Reinhardt Neitge became restless and he started west for California. Nothing more was ever heard from Reinhardt Neitge. George Otto Neitge Sr. stayed in the area and was naturalized on May 13, 1868 in St. Croix County. Some of the settlers who worked on the stockade were: Hans Thompson, Henry Finke, Levi Torkelson, Gottlieb Matthews, Henry Fouks, and John Smith. They worked for fifty cents a day.

In 1868, a railroad survey crew came through the area where the deer stockade was built (south part of the NW1/4 of section 8.) George Otto Neitge was told the railroad was to come through this area and the south wall of the stockade would have to be moved. In exchange for destroying



Painting of the Otto Neitge home on the original 160 acres east of Deer Park.

the stockade the railroad gave George Otto Neitge Sr. 160 acres in Section 15 of the Town of Cylon. The Willow River ran through the center of this land.

When the railroad was constructed in 1874, George Otto Neitge Sr. abandoned the stockade and moved his new family to the 160 acres along the Willow River. When George Otto Neitge Jr. arrived in the area, he found his father with a new family living on the 160 acres along the Willow River. Needless to say, there

were bad feelings between the father and son. George Otto Neitge Jr. and his family settled on the land where the stockade had been.

On April 29th, 1889, George Otto Neitge Sr. died. There was a last will and testament dated November 19, 1888. In it John Torkelson was named as the executor of the estate. Everything including the farm located along the Willow River, which had increased to 300 acres, was left to his second son Julius. In the will there was no mention of the other son, George Otto Neitge Jr. and the property just east of what is now the Village of Deer Park. George Otto Neitge Jr. petitioned the court to declare him as a son of George Otto Neitge Sr. and he was entitled to the 160 acres in Section 8 and 20 acres in Section 16 of the Town of Cylon. Henry Finke was named administrator and the petition was granted.

#### Sources:

##### Cows, Creameries and Cheese Factories

St. Croix Association for Home and Community Education History Project Committee, 1995.

##### The History Of The Beginning And Growth Of The Village Of Deer Park, Wisconsin And The Surrounding Area, Volumes 1 And 2

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##### Remembering Rural Schools of St. Croix County

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